

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Watershed Coalition of the
Lehigh Valley
www.watershedcoalitionlv.org

Master Watershed Steward Rain Garden and Education Projects (2016)

SUMMARY

As part of their volunteer training, Master Watershed Stewards carry out group projects aimed at on-the-ground impact and public outreach and education. This year's projects included rain garden design and installation with educational signs at Plainfield Township, Pen Argyl Borough, and Upper Saucon Township buildings, an educational display about the Monocacy Creek Watershed at Illick's Mill in Bethlehem, and a green roof table-top display for use at educational events. Also included is a demonstration green roof at the Johnson Estate, and workshops on rain gardens and green roofs.



CHALLENGE

To meet the increasing need for trained volunteers to carry out on-the-ground and educational natural resource projects, the Master Watershed Steward program was created by Lehigh Valley project partners in 2013. With an educated volunteer workforce, conservation projects in the region can be completed much more efficiently and more work can be accomplished. The group projects detailed here helped jump start our Stewards' volunteer work with local project partners in addition to helping educate the public. The program's group projects focus on visible demonstration projects at facilities like public parks and municipal buildings, to maximize the audience for conservation projects, under the belief that the more people encounter conservation work in public places, the more likely they are to replicate such practices on their own property, and become involved in such work themselves. The challenge is two-fold: first are the environmental problems themselves - stormwater runoff, dams impacting stream health, invasive species reducing biodiversity in our forests and meadows, streams and rivers polluted by fertilizers and pesticides. But the secondary problem is a lack of public knowledge about the problems, and uncertainty about the correct things to do in response. The group projects carried out under this grant addressed both issues: in creating on-the-ground demonstration projects with signs, problems are improved while the public is informed. And, by creating educational displays and curriculums to use them, tools are available for education and outreach at fairs, schools, and workshops.

FUNDING

Grant Award:
\$ 10,000.00

Match:
\$ 22,535.43

Total Project Cost:
\$ 32,535.43

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Group projects were completed in cooperation with Penn State Extension, Northampton County Conservation District, Upper Saucon Township, Plainfield Township, Pen Argyl Borough, the Appalachian Mountain Club, Lehigh University, the Johnston Estate, the Wildlands Conservancy, and the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association.



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SOLUTION

Long-term, environmental challenges can only be effectively addressed by a knowledgeable, engaged public and by educated community leaders. The Master Watershed Steward program was created to meet both aims. The group projects provide new trainees with the opportunity to engage in real-world projects in a structured setting, allowing them to encounter, first-hand, the complexities of conservation work. Volunteers on the 2014 projects dealt with common problems such as the difficulties of getting new plants established, the frustration of invasive plant removal from rain gardens, and the different viewpoints required to work with community groups, municipal staff, and the public. They were able to learn from experienced professionals and see, first hand, how projects move from concept to implementation and through maintenance. Our class members have gone on to take on leadership roles in watershed associations, in their own municipalities, and the natural resource community in the Lehigh Valley.

RESULTS

In addition to three rain gardens installed and signs put in place at each garden, two green roof displays have been built and are in use by the Wildlands Conservancy and the Master Watershed Steward program. The rain gardens will remove approximately 212,000 gallons of runoff from local storm sewer systems annually, and will additionally reach hundreds of community members visiting the municipal buildings.



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Pen Argyl Rain Garden – BEFORE



Pen Argyl Rain Garden - AFTER



Green Roof Display

